

Editorial

Interdisciplinary Perspectives On Culture, Power And Values: Language And Literary Studies In The Local-global Context

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Research and innovations in language-related issues are very diverse and pose several challenges be it in the local or global context. The seven articles in this Special Issue articulate these local and global issues and challenges from pedagogical, linguistic and literary perspectives. They are a selection of papers presented at the SoLLs.INTEC 2011 International Conference organised by the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia which have been revised and undergone the normal review process for this journal.

In relation to pedagogy, the researchers discuss issues in language development incorporating cultural values and power relations in the classrooms. They also illustrate the use of an automated tool for marking which in the past was totally dependent on the human mind. In the field of linguistics, two researchers explore the meaning of lexical items and the different senses of prepositions in the Arabic contexts. In literary works, the writers have taken a new approach in projecting and addressing social conflicts of today's society. Another article looks at the master-slave relationship in a Shakespearean play to offer new perspectives on loyalty and nobility.

Faiz Sathi Abdullah and Kobra Hosseini take a critical approach in exploring power relations in Iranian high school classrooms. The article, *Discursive Enactment of Power in Iranian High School EFL Classrooms* has adopted Freire's (1970) Critical Pedagogy which calls for the transformation of the oppressive and repressive conditions that commonly afflict any language learning situation and seeks to uphold a more equitable

and dialogical teacher-student relationship. The researchers argue that unequal power relation continues to be a prominent discursual feature in many EFL classrooms as exemplified by observations in the two Iranian classrooms. Employing the CDA framework to probe the nature of existing teacher-student power relations in the language classrooms, the researchers' analysis of the transcripts of classroom interactions shows that the students continue to remain passive and powerless while the teachers persistently play dominant roles by exploiting various discursive strategies such as maximizing teacher-controlled talking time, turn-taking, topic control, modes of meaning-construction, and elicitation strategies. The researchers suggest longitudinal ethnographic studies to be conducted on a larger scale in order to probe other significant issues that continue to dominate the EFL language learning classrooms.

Normalis Amzah, Natsue Hieda and Mimiko Nezu in their paper, entitled *Incorporating Culture in Japanese Language Learning*, demonstrate how cultural aspects are essential in mastering a foreign language. They assert that Japanese language courses taught at UKM should not only emphasize on the grammar aspects but focus more on the cultural aspects. They incorporate culture in language learning by using *Erin ga Chousen! Nihongo Dekimasu*. This method applied in the form of an action research gives importance to a student centered learning environment. The action research was implemented in two cycles. The first cycle was treated as a pilot study and some improvements based on the findings were made for the second cycle. The teaching method received positive feedback from the students as they were committed to complete and present their assignments in the Japanese language. The action research also encourages the instructors to systematically introduce new teaching material and methods that will be beneficial in teaching and learning the Japanese language.

Development of an Automated Tool for Detecting Errors in Tenses by Tengku Nor Rizan Tengku Mohd Maasum, Siti Hamin Stapa, Nazlia Omar, Mohd Juzaidin Ab Aziz and Saadiyah Darus tells us more about how computers can evaluate essays as competent as human marking. The Automated Tool for Detecting Errors in Tenses (ATDEiT™) was used to analyse the common errors in tenses found in 400 essays written by a selected group of tertiary-level ESL learners. The ATDEiT™ has been proven to be useful and can be used as an automated tool for detecting errors in tenses in the writing tasks of ESL learners.

In their article *Setia (loyal) from Semantics Prosody Perspective: A Corpus-based Analysis*, Hishamudin Isam and Norsimah Mat Awal scrutinize the lexical item *setia* (loyal) from two diverse and seemingly conflicting perspectives; linguistics and social values. By employing the semantics prosody approach, the writers attempt to answer the question whether the lexical item *setia* falls into the positive or negative realm. Contemporary use and views on the word *setia* positively highlight its significance in nation-building as opposed to past studies which associate the word *setia* with feudalism. Through analysis of selected corpus-based data in which the word *setia* was used, the writers have proven that linguistically, *setia* is frequently collocated with a group of words that have equally developed good, positive sense. This development exemplifies the betterment of a word's meaning as when a word with negative sense develops into a positive one.

Turki Mahyoub Qaid Mohammed, Imran Ho-Abdullah and Tan Kim Hua analyze the different senses of the Arabic preposition (*fii*) as used in the Taizzi dialect spoken in Yemen. In their article, *A Cognitive Semantic Analysis of the Preposition (fii) in the Taizzi Dialect: A Cultural Variation Perspective*, the notions of Cognitive Grammar proposed by Langacker (1987) was employed. The writers systematically show how the speakers of the Taizzi dialect exploit a preposition to encode a spatial relation and develop the use of (*fii*) and extended its semantics to cover cognitive domains which is different from its use in Standard Arabic or other Arabic dialects. The findings of their study reflect the cultural variance of prepositional usage in the Taizzi dialect in particular and other Arabic dialects in general. The article emphasizes that the users of Taizzi dialect cognitively characterize the relation holding between the Trajector (TR) and the Landmark (LM) as a containment relation despite using (*fii*) in cognitive domains different from its use in Standard Arabic language.

Mazmi Maarof, Ruzy Suliza Hashim, Noraini Md Yusof and Raihanah M. M. in *Young Women Speak Out: Healing the Selves Through Narrative Therapy* depict narratives that are clear and loud in the agenda to encourage women to talk and share their experiences of being abused and how these dark episodes have affected them and their loved ones. The writers in the anthology offer narratives that empowered the main characters with strong wills and determination to overcome the negative legacy of abuse and/or violence. Situating the stories as narrative therapy within Kamsler's framework, the writers have shown how each character has successfully found her voice through personal struggle and these are analysed in three stages that are presented in the stories.

Florence Toh and Arbaayah Ali Termizi in *Roycean Loyalty in William Shakespeare's Timon of Athens* deconstruct the Shakespearean concept of loyalty in master-servant relationship as portrayed in *Timon of Athens*. The paper adopts Royce's (1971) definition of loyalty as "the willing and practical and thoroughgoing devotion of a person to a cause" (152), involving "some element of free choice" (110). The Steward demonstrated loyalty by speaking the truth, minimizing conflicts and idealizing the lost cause which helped him to enhance his self-will and forgo self-gratification. The application of Royce's concepts of loyalty further presents new perspectives in conceiving how Shakespeare's servants contribute to the portraiture of their masters.

References

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